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Viewing cable 06BOGOTA1858, POLO'S SAMUEL MORENO ON ELECTORAL POLITICS,

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06BOGOTA1858	2006-03-01 20:50	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Bogota

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 001858

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/28/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#)
SUBJECT: POLO'S SAMUEL MORENO ON ELECTORAL POLITICS,
URIBE'S NEXT TERM, AND FREE-TRADE

REF: BOGOTA 1447

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Polo Democratico Alternativo (Polo) President Samuel Moreno predicted his party would get up to 17 Senate seats in the March 12 congressional elections. He said the Polo would use anti-free trade rhetoric to win votes, and argued that Uribe would have a reduced majority in Congress and a harder time getting legislation passed. Moreno said he plans to run for Mayor of Bogota in 2007. End summary.

The March 12 Election

¶2. (C) According to Moreno, the Polo will get 12-17 Senate seats on March 12. He predicted it would get about four of the 18 House seats in Bogota. (He did not comment more broadly on how the Polo expects to fare in obtaining House seats nationwide.) Moreno estimated 8-9 of the registered parties would not reach the 2 percent "umbral" (the new legal threshold to retain their legal status is about 240,000 votes nationally). He said the Polo would benefit from a provision in the new electoral rules, which redistributes votes originally cast for such parties. (Even experienced analysts are not sure exactly how "umbral" and redistributed votes will affect the results.) (Reftel)

Impact of Free Trade on Elections

¶3. (C) Moreno said the free trade agreement (FTA) that closed on February 27 will help Polo gain congressional representation. He argued that the 57 percent of people holding a negative opinion of the FTA will associate the FTA with the "U" Party, likely benefiting the Polo and Liberal parties. Moreno predicted the Polo's strong opposition to the FTA could bring as many as 5 additional seats in the House, and 1 seat in the Senate. He suggested the Polo would benefit most in the departments of Valle de Cauca, Huila, and Tolima, as the economies of these regions are driven by the agricultural sector. (Note: The Polo will try to make the FTA a campaign issue. Moreno, who falls on the moderate side of his party, said the Polo line is that the GOC should have negotiated a continuation of the Andean Trade Preferences and Drug Enforcement Act (ATPDEA). When reminded that the U.S. Congress would not extend ATPDEA again, he acknowledged the position would be a tough call. End Note.)

On Uribe's Next Term

¶4. (SBU) Moreno said Uribe will have more problems getting legislation passed with the new Congress than he did with the current body. He predicted the Congress will split about 55-60 percent in favor of Uribe, and 40-45 percent against him. In the current Congress, Uribe has about 70 percent support. He argued that voters would prefer a "check and balance" in the system, between Uribe and left-leaning Congressional representation.

¶5. (C) In Moreno's view, Uribe will likely be able to pass some of his less-contentious legislation by simple majority vote, especially during the traditional "honeymoon" period. He predicted, however, that this period would be considerably shorter than the traditional 2 years. (Septel) Moreno said Uribe would need to "sweeten the deals" for legislators to convince them to vote in favor of his projects.

¶6. (C) Moreno compared Uribe to Hugo Chavez, saying his ego and consolidation of power may even hurt him within the "U" Party. Both Uribe and Chavez have not effectively shared power, said Moreno, and Uribe is increasingly alienating some within his own movement. He also suggested Uribe might take a shot at a third term.

The Political Landscape in 2010

¶7. (SBU) Moreno said the "U" Party will almost certainly dissolve before the 2010 Presidential election, sending current Uribeistas to other parties. He also believes current

Bogota Mayor Lucho Garzon (Polo) will be a serious contender for President in 2010, and also mentioned Enrique Penalosa, Rodrigo Rivera, Rafael Pardo, and German Vargas Lleras as other possible candidates. Moreno said he plans to run for Mayor of Bogota in 2007.

Comment

¶8. (C) The left remains divided in the run-up to Congressional and Presidential elections. Embassy views Moreno's predictions across the board as overly optimistic.
WOOD

=====CABLE ENDS=====